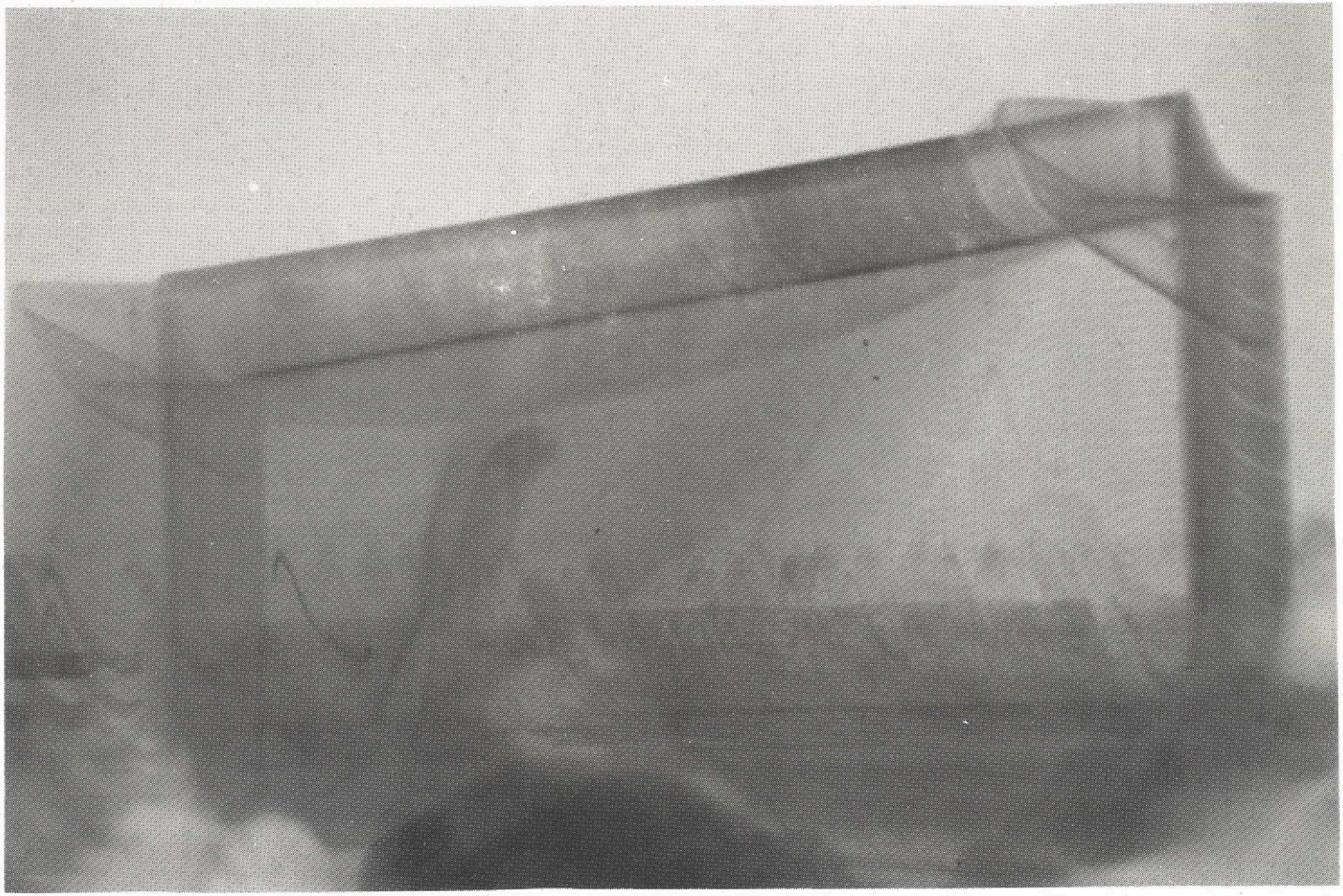
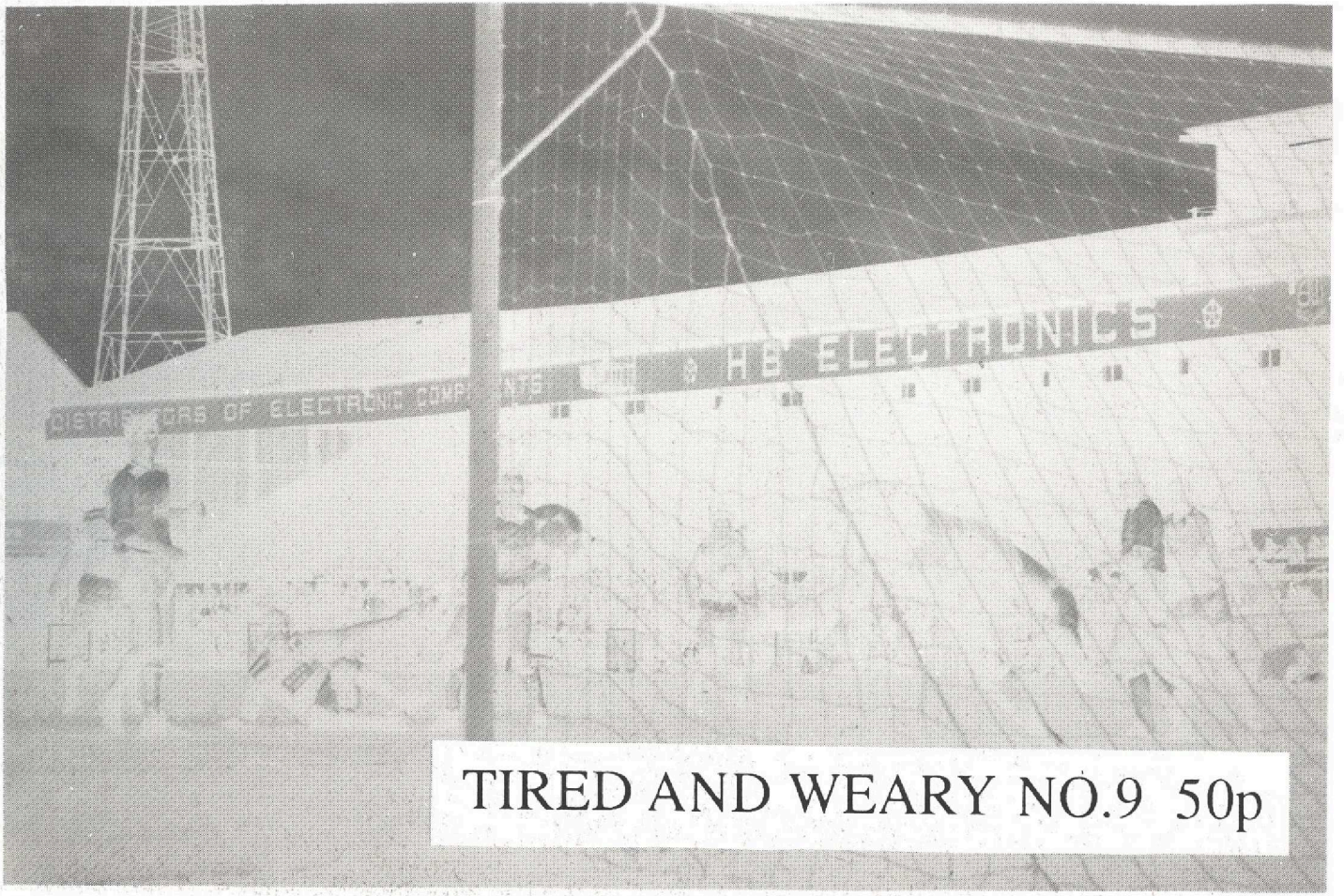




TIRED AND WEARY NO.9 50p

OPEN TO QUESTION

Re-birth of the Blues? Much has been conceived but still too little delivered. This, despite more being done in the last twelve months than in all the previous ten years added together. One only has to look at the Soccer Shop, the Gold Club and the Family Rooms to appreciate this. The Kumar BROTHERS may have bought Birmingham City, but there can be no doubt that Samesh has been the driving force. His combination of entrepreneurship and enthusiasm is rare among football club chairmen and should be made full use of by Blues fans. Indeed the Chairman has provided us with a unique opportunity to do this at a series of meetings with fans, the first of which took place on March 29th.

This new spirit of openness had been foreshadowed at the AGM in Manchester last December. Samesh seemed genuinely taken aback at the furore over the choice of venue and made a point at the end of the meeting of talking first to the fans present, keeping the back page big boys waiting 20 minutes. At the time he promised to consider holding an open meeting for ALL supporters. What transpired, regular sessions with 20 fans in attendance, may not be ideal, but if the first of the series is anything to go by, it at least affords the opportunity for constructive debate where all who wish to make points can do so.The three hour 'seminar' gave a valuable insight into both the Kumars' strategy for the club as well as the personal thoughts and opinions of Chairman Sam.

The Executive Club's sumptuous surroundings, as well as Samesh's own words, made it clear that income from business sponsorship had been the priority, initially to generate finance for players. Only later would ordinary supporters reap the benefits of improved facilities, corporate customers needing to be convinced of the club's new public profile. And indeed the commercial side is a lot healthier, with kit sponsorship secured for virtually all the players and a very high take-up of executive boxes. Having said this, and despite regular references to Manchester United, his years on the Stretford End undoubtedly give the Chairman a feeling for the needs of Blues' terrace supporters.

This was made clear in his attitude to the policing of the Tilton - "I'm no great lover of the police" - during the Swansea game when he had to persuade them to let him calm the situation. The fact that police charges were likely to increase by 33% to £100,000 this season also angered him. The removal of most of the perimeter fencing at St Andrews is further evidence of the faith the new regime is prepared to show in the club's fans. This trust deserves not to be betrayed.

The virtual absence of social facilities for the majority has also not gone unnoticed. Samesh seemed to enjoy reeling off some shocking tales about the old Supporters Club, mostly concerning the ever-expanding expense account of Maurice Reubins, the club's ex-Chairman. Such stories help explain how deep-seated the problems surrounding the takeover of the Supporters Club were. The football club's inexcusable failure to secure the Supporters Club a drinks licence was noted and the refurbishment of a large empty room under the City Stand into a social venue was being investigated. Commendable awareness was also shown about the tinny tannoy system, which is to be improved for next season, as will the matchday programme. The present franchise arrangement will end, with Blues taking over its production. Suggestions for improvements are welcomed, a decent photographer being a priority.

Of major importance to the club's continued rehabilitation is the promised appointment of "someone highly respected throughout the Football League" as full-time administrator. The Chairman expects great things of this person. For instance they will be responsible for applying for Football Grounds Improvement Trust grants to remedy the disgusting state of the St Andrews toilets. Kumar hinted promisingly that this new post will "render other staff at the club insignificant. People who supporters have had to deal with in the past may merge into the background. One or two may be about to leave." This could all be welcome news, but why have we waited nearly a year for the obvious to be stated, and still the Chairman refuses to name names? Ken Wheldon and John Westmancoat have no part to play in

the re-birth of the Blues, having nearly starved the club to death. Let's hope for Wolves' sake that the two W's aren't Molineux-bound as part of Sir Jack Hayward's consortium.

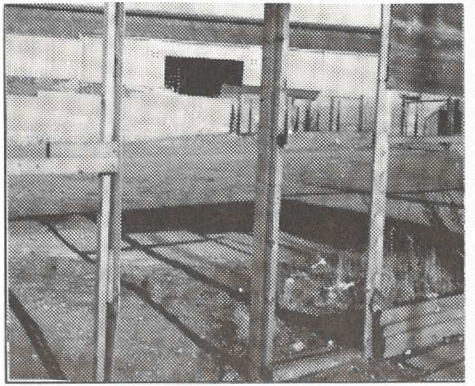
There is no call for unconstructive cynicism at Blues, though despite the undoubted progress, anxieties remain. The idea of 'meet the Chairman' evenings is innovative and the first one was definitely valuable, particularly given Samesh's refreshing honesty and detailed knowledge of the playing side. He clearly takes an interest in the reserves and highlighted the injury jeopardizing Adrian Bird's career. He told how whenever the Club Scout watches players in London he goes too. It might be argued that Samesh Kumar is too involved - Dave Madden's transfer was apparently aborted due to the Chairman being unconvinced of the player's commitment. However, his judgements of existing Blues players were admirably frank; for example of Kevin Langley, "touch player with no bottle", of Dougie Bell, "he'll probably never score again in his career."

Yet despite Samesh's undoubted enthusiasm and motivation, the confusions and contradictions of recent interviews were not fully resolved. The possibility of having to sell "one player in the short term" was not ruled out at this meeting. It should also be noted that at the AGM Wheldon stated that the half million the Kumars have injected into the club shoud be seen as loans, which they will eventually wish to recoup.

The fact that most of the ground is still a mess is unlikely to be rectified in the near future. According to Samesh, six meetings with the City Council have made little progress. Whether this is due to the Chairman only being at the club for a small part of the week and expecting to get things done by cutting corners is hard to tell, but he is quick to criticise any organisation or individual who he feels is not giving the club full support.

The precise role of the board is unclear, Ramesh was commended for his commitment and approachability but little has been seen of him publicly, other than on match days. Club lawyer Brian Slater seems to do little apart from model ill-fitting out-of-date suits, although he may be dealing with Garry Pendrey's compensation claim. At least we know why Jack Wiseman is still there. Samesh stated "he gets me tickets for England matches."

How regular these open meetings will be is unclear. One slightly worrying aspect is whether go-between Ivor Crigman will feel able to ask more difficult questions than he has so far. His Terrace Talk column in the club programme certainly doesn't pull up any trees.



The mixture of achievement, unfulfilled promises and lingering uncertainties means that the verdict on Samesh Kumar's first year must mirror his own opinion of Dave Mackay and Bobby Ferguson: "Reasonable".

Both on and off the field, the new regime is only now coming to terms with years of neglect that left Birmingham City rotten to the core. I suspect that they have taken on more than they bargained for, and it will take more than hype and a quickfire half a million to cure the problems.

Too much is still on the drawing board, too many of the old guard have been allowed to hang on and too many important questions are still being sidestepped. (On the training ground deal for instance, the Chairman refused to be drawn on a time scale for the elusive £5m to start flowing in.) For all that, Blues have turned the corner and progress has been made. If all Samesh's ideas come to fruition then we might see a real breakthrough. Doubts remain, but he deserves a chance to dispel them.

DAVID PARKER

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Steve Beauchampé, Jim Bryant, Matt Cole, Hugh O'Sullivan and David Parker are Tired and Weary. They were helped by Paul Baker, Wayne Brereton, Brian Caswell, Sid Collins,Sally Cooper, Jim Docherty, Tom Gavin, Adrian Goldberg, Dave Hancock, Malcolm McHenry, John Kelly, Mark Lewis,Steve Moss, Arthur O'Sullivan, Nigel Roberts, Mike Sherry and David Warren. Tired and Weary No's 1-8 have long since sold out but photocopies at 20p each (plus 15p A5 sae) are available from the above address. To guarantee receiving the next three issues send a cheque or postal order for £1.95 made payable to 'Tired and Weary.' The magazine can also be purchased from: Nostalgia and Comics, Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham; Virgin Records, Corporation St, Birmingham; AFN Distribution, 127 Langbrook Rd, London SE3 8RA (postal enquiries only); Sportspages, Charing Cross Rd and Rough Trade Records, Talbot Rd, London; Cardiff City Supporters Club, Ninian Park, Cardiff; Piccadily Records, Manchester; The pitch at Lords; Selectadisc, Market St, Nottingham; Scarborough Sidney Record, under City Hall, Hull; Sport in Print, Nottingham; Swordfish Records, Needless Alley, Birmingham; Omega Records, Witton St, Northwich, Cheshire; Strathclyde Programme Shop, Renfield St, Glasgow and Waterstones Bookshop, High Street, Birmingham. We have a few copies of Birmingham City - A Complete Record for sale at £14.95 including p&p. Tired and Weary is always after YOUR support. We need your letters, views, photos etc. and also more of your help to sell the magazine for us. Printed by Juma, First Floor, Trafalgar Works, 44 Wellington Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S1 4HD.

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DAN OF ANTIQUITY

The off-licence was an austere place, as they all were in the early sixties. A worn linoleum floor, and a bar which stretched the full width of the premises from which sprouted two hand pumps. The walls were completely bare except for the one behind the bar on which hung the inevitable bags of scratchings and a framed photograph of a football team. Dan Tremelling was licensed to sell beer, spirits, tobacco et al, and although I regularly blew my pocket money on his crisps, the name above the door meant nothing to me. The old chap who emerged from his living room at the back every time the bell sounded was unremarkable to an eight year-old, so long as he had crisps in stock. And although I was football mad, the team in the photograph were unrecognisable, and besides they were clearly from an earlier age and so of no great interest.

Then a schoolmate told me that the bloke at the off-licence used to play in goal for Blues. Although my mom wouldn't let me go until I was ten, I was a committed supporter. Never having seen a footballer, past or present, I tried to imagine the old guy behind those two handpumps as if poised between the posts ready to tip over a canonball shot from... well I didn't know any pre-war footballers! But I couldn't. When you're a kid, age is permanent. You are young forever, and old men have always been so. And soon Dan Tremelling disappeared as a conversation piece among Acocks Green weenies.

We left the area in 1966, and four years later Dan Tremelling died. But it wasn't until recently that I rekindled an interest in the man. Delving into the club's past, Tremelling turned out to be one of the most popular figures in our history, and became one of my personal favourites. Dan's entry into League football coincided with improvements in photographic techniques, and action shots of the Blues custodian appeared quite regularly in the local press. So after a quarter of a century I could at last visualise him in front of the St Andrews crowd. Those big hands confidently clutching the ball, the cloth cap matching the thousands in the crowd, the look of intense concentration. A hero from a bygone age.

Tremelling was one of a breed which was virtually wiped out with the abolition of the maximum wage, and which vanished without trace after the introduction of freedom of contract. An international footballer who served his club with great loyalty, and retired with almost nothing to show for a fine career. His background was archetypal, and he followed the well trodden interwar years

path from school to pit, from pit to football, and then into the licensed trade. Born near Burton or Mansfield, depending on the source, he left school for Shirebrook Colliery where he worked the night shift. Emerging at 6am, the pit boys would have breakfast before playing football for hours still wearing their clogs. Worthy of Pythonesque parody maybe, but young Dan's goalkeeping practice paid off. He graduated from Langworth Junction Wagon Works to Lincoln City although playing as an amateur while working down the mines.

It was his performance in Blues penultimate wartime area league match in 1919 that resulted in him coming to St Andrews. Blues lost 1-0 despite throwing everything at the young 'keeper, a result that cost them the Midland title. Within a couple of weeks Tremelling became a professional player with Birmingham and bade farewell to the mines. He was an instant success with his new club, playing a big part in the 1920/21 promotion winning team. As always, Blues struggled in the top flight, and Tremelling had his work cut out to keep them there. When he missed the final match of the1925/26 season he had appeared in 126 consecutive matches, 276 overall for the club. His heroics had gone unrewarded, as had the great performances of a couple of his more celebrated teammates, for there seemed little chance of Blues making a mark in Division One. A former player lamented at the time, "it must be heartbreaking for Tremelling, Barton, and Bradford to be on the losing side each week."

But the overworked 'keeper at last got some reward for his great efforts when, in September 1926, he was selected for the Football League. The following seson he was chosen for England (for the first and only time) and performed pretty well in the 2-1 defeat by Wales. But Harry Hibbs, the young player who had taken over from him at the end of 1925/26 was soon to oust Tremelling permanently from the Blues team and make the England jersey his own for several years. Yet Dan stayed with Blues until 1932, when he became assistant trainer at Bury. At one stage he had dropped to the third team, but made few efforts to leave his beloved St Andrews. In 1936 he returned to his football home as assistant trainer - a popular appointment among players and spectators. But the outbreak of war ended Dan Tremelling's association with the club. He went into the licensed trade and became landlord of the Colebrook Hotel in Hall Green, before moving into our neighbourhood off-licence as a prelude to retirement. He was one of a series of talented interwar players that had to suffer Birmingham's inability to develop a successful team. Like most of them, he put up with the club's failings without complaining, keeping the faith of the 20,000 regulars. And then like most of them, he grew old in the kind of modest surroundings from whence he had come. Football then was no passport to affluence. Dan Tremelling was a hero from a forgotten era perhaps,but he was a True Blue who lives on,at least for one former customer.

PAUL BAKER

UNTRUTHFUL

Back in mid-1988 the police raised their already steep bill for overmanning West Midlands soccer matches and our local clubs told us that this would mean an increase in admission charges. At Blues, terrace prices rose from £3 to £4. Then in the Fulham programme on January 1st 1990 we learned that policing St Andrews costs 40p per spectator. The 1988 increase accounted for only a small percentage of this figure. So why a £1 price rise? We were never told that this quid covered any other increases in club overheads, the whole sum being passed off as needed to meet the extra policing costs. We were lied to. Remember that next time admission prices are raised.

INSIDE ST. ANDREW'S

Johnnie Football, the man with the Chairman's ear, reports for ya on what's in and who's out direct from behind the scenes at Birmingham City.

It's 8am. Samesh spins dizzily in his swivel chair, a 'phone pressed to each ear. Man Utd lost last night and he's in a bad mood. "OK" he says, jabbing a spare finger "the cheapest polyester you can find". He slams one 'phone down and concentrates on the other "No, no, they should never have dropped Jim Holton." I leave him to his disappointment. Outside, the office is quiet.

Suddenly Ken breezes in, Sporting Life under one arm. He's off to the Gold Cup tomorrow and there's winners to be picked. "Yo!" he hails. "Got lucky yesterday Johnnie, nice little filly at Redcar, romped home at 15-2."

By 9.30 the office is buzzing, YTS staff everywhere. Samesh, Ramesh, Bimal and cousin Ashok are deep in discussion. Was Sheffield Wednesday's winner offside or was United's defence too square once too often?

"Anyone seen John Westmancoat?" asks Brian Caswell as he struggles with a projector screen and box of slides. A leper colony has just opened on Garrison Lane and Caswell's going to show them what the club has to offer. If it goes well he tells me, one or two of them might be invited down for trials.

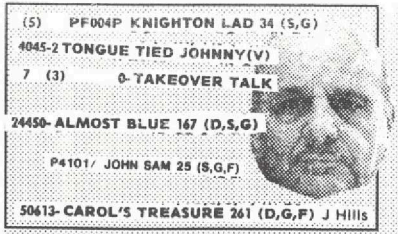
Meanwhile, over in the manager's office, Dave Mackay's predicting great things for Brian Roberts. "You know" he tells a journalist or two "I think the lad could be even better than Paul Tait!"

I wander over to the Soccer Shop and open the door. Inside it's like a 1950's London smog - two staff members and a customer crawl out, hankerchiefs to their faces, eyes streaming. "By heck Carol" I cry cheerily "you're getting through a few fags this morning." The smoke clears to reveal a game of football taking place. Right-hand counter staff against left. Someone kicks the ball through the shop's front window and we watch it roll down Coventry Road, sales assistant in hot pursuit. "They're a rumbustuous bunch but they mean well" smiles the nicotine queen, and somehow I feel compelled to buy a tacky souvenir.

Back in the office Jack Wiseman is hanging around looking for something to do. Fellow board member and self-confessed Third Lanark fan Brain Slater ("I really must get to see them again some time") is encountering problems with an ill-fitting suit. "These trousers are too damn short" he complains." Serves you right for buying your clothes from Mark One then doesn't it" beams Ken. "It's the only place I know where Paul Tait can get off-the-peg trousers that fit him."

Back in the boardroom the debate has moved on as Ramesh recalls United/City derbies and the boys rap about the latest Old Trafford takeover talk. "You know" says Samesh, winding up his bow tie, "I'm sure Ivor Crigman's a made-up name." He repeats it slowly and thoughtfully "I-V-O-R-C-R-I-G-M-A-N - there's a joke in there somewhere but I can't fathom it." He releases the now taut bow tie and suddenly he's off flying round the room on his back like a helicopter, flapping his arms. "I bet Mark Hughes can't do this" he exclaims joyously.

Next door Ken's busy. He's got a football club to run and his most difficult task is making sure Steve Bull stays. "Say I'll go halves with him on any profit I make on The Oaks" he tells a messenger from Molineux.



"I can't say fairer than that - well I could, but I'm not going to. Eh, you haven't seen John Westmancoat have you?"

Suddenly, a tomahawk whizzes past his head and embeds itself in the cupboard behind him. "What the f..." His knee-jerk reaction is throttled at birth by the sight of a tribe of Sioux Indians marauding down the corridor. They're holding a bring and buy in the family room and their leader, Big Chief Darren of Lozells, a direct descendant of Sitting Bull, asks Ken how much he'll give him for some wantham beads. "All I've got is a white fiver, two ten bob notes and a used betting slip and you're not having them. And if you've got a pipe of peace don't bother me, go over to Cattell Road and see fag ash Lil."

Tom Edmonds pokes his head round the door; "Hey Johnnie, want to buy a lottery ticket?" I fiddle in my trouser pockets" ...er, er... ah, Ken, me old rapscallion, can I touch you for a fiver?" He pretends to be studying form. I find 50p. "Give us a ticket then." Suddenly the room shakes like there's an earthquake, and from next door comes a wailing "Goooooaaaaalllll - Bobby Charlton!!!!" followed by the muffled thud of something heavy tipping over. "Hey Tom, Tom look, I've won a Ford Fiesta!" "Ha, ha, ha" laughs Ken, "I bet that's pissed him off Johnnie, he's only on the Board on condition that he raises funds." I buy another ticket... and then another... in the next half hour I win a holiday in Sri Lanka, a CD player, a cuddly toy and 2 tickets for Phantom of the Opera. Edmonds looks mortified.

Over lunch, a group of lads from the Tilton are shown behind the scenes and afterwards physio. Peter Henderson treats those still recovering from their regular Saturday beating by the West Midlands Fabricated Crime Squad who police the ground on matchdays. Samesh comes in determinedly: "This club isn't open enough - everybody take your desks out onto Coventry Road and work from there - no, better still, I want the outside walls of these offices removed. Tell Westmancoat to get onto the builders. Westmancoat... Westmancoat... has anybody seen him?"

The afternoon sunshine dances playfuly off the chrome on the tinker caravans parked higgledy-piggledy across the St Andrews pitch. The terraces have been turned into a tented village for the homeless and dropouts and Brian Caswell and his team are on the spot, heating up cups of meths for the destitute and rolling them joints. "A group of tinker lads looted the club shop last night and stole lead slates off the roof" says Brian, wiping chocolate from round one young nipper's mouth. "But they mean well and they're as good as gold really."

But the picture's not so bright in the Supporters Club, now transformed into a mortuary to house those struck down in the recent food poisoning plague. The death toll stands at 18. "Botulism mainly" says the City Coroner "though we think that watching the Wigan and Chester games did for at least three of them."

It's around four o'clock and Mackay, back from Lancashire, where he's been taking training, is holding court: "We've sold Tait, Sturridge, Bailey, Gleghorn, Ashley, Thomas, Frain and Colin Gordon. But now we're financially sound we'll never have to sell again." "So long as gates average 45,000" murmurs Samesh. Mackay continues: "I've signed the guy Dougie Bell was keeping out of the team at Shrewsbury and an exciting young keeper called Lev Yashin - it'll be just the boost the side needs for the final run-in to the play-offs. Things are looking pretty good now... if we can just add a bit of consistency to our play."

30 minutes later, Samesh, kitted out in the famous red and white, leaps into Mackay's office, juggling three balls on his head simultaneously. "Let me play Saturday Dave, go on pick me... please."

I saunter into the reception area where Bimal and Ken are working on some new leisure wear Scrapper's set to model on next Sunday's edition of The Clothes Show. It's a skirt, embroidered with match tickets and finished off with recycled metal piping. "It'll go nice with one of those Blues On Tour T Shirts" insists Bimal - and he is serious!

But before Ken can mock him, Sam and Ram dash out from the main offices. "Come on Bim-Bam, we'll be late." "Where are you going?" I ask. "Central League game - United v Barnsley, can't miss that" says Saville Row Sam: "Oh, if you see John Westmancoat, tell him where we've gone."

CATTELL MARKET

There used to be an old souvenir shop on the brow of Cattell Road that few ever visited. It was a dark, unwelcoming place which even Blues eventually deserted. So it stood, boarded up and neglected, until the Kumars bought the football club - lock, stock and house on the hill. And out of the old eyesores' ruins they've created a colourful structure which, commendably, opens throughout the week. Hopefully, significant profits will accrue to allow this to continue. Its success will be partly determined by the range of merchandise it sells. So what's on offer? Match videos cost £12.99 - a little pricey perhaps, but about the norm for Division Three (Bristol City's cost 25 quid!) However the honesty regarding tape quality and entertainment value is to be applauded. Huddersfield at home for example is described as 'only fair' and the game as 'poor'. (The 0-0 draw with Wigan isn't even stocked). Hopefully, come August there'll be a compilation video of this season's best action.

Naturally, the shop carries a wide selection of Blues souvenirs which are an important source of revenue and, for many, are convenient gifts and expressions of support. Goods include jewellery and aprons, ashtrays and rock (for sucking, not throwing - though bearing in mind the standard of our catering and some of this season's performances...) perfumes and items of underwear.

And after buying the usual badges and pennants, scarves and rosettes, tankards and mugs, there are Birmingham City carrier bags to take the lot home in.

There's also a considerable range of sports goods on offer with a selection of tracksuits, sweatshirts, cycle shorts, table tennis equipment, squash rackets and even surgical supports. Any Blues fan after an international jersey should at least consider the club shop. However, supporters buying Blues' official shirt ought at least to have the choice of whether or not they want to be a walking advertisement for Mark One.

Alas, certain goods reek of tackiness: baseball caps with bananas and clapping hands (is this Blackpool beach or an aspiring major footballing power?) while the embossed ski jackets are hardly Paris catwalk stuff. There's also enough bland jumpers and cardigans to fill a whole wardrobe for a Question of Sport. Then there's the degrading and embarrassingly unfunny T Shirt designs such as the 'Blues On Tour' and the sexist 'I got a ticket for the wife' effort - how many of those do you see being worn? More original, and seemingly more popular, are the rugby-style Blues' jerseys which provide an interesting alternative sports top to the official shirt.

With Carol Crossland in charge, the soccer shop is a friendly and welcoming place that's unquestionably well stocked with the products found in most club shops. But it hasn't the goods to make it worth visiting regularly (which the lifting of the away ticket ruling will merely exacerbate). Selling football magazines, a wide selection of programmes and fanzines would create more on-going interest than simply carrying bobble hats and scarves etc that people perhaps only buy once a season. The shop certainly has space to expand, with the right-hand side used as little more than a sales point for coach bookings. Far better to also use this area to carry petition forms (against all-seat stadia for in-

stance) Supporters Club and FSA membership forms and the London Branch supporters magazine. A noticeboard could be put up giving ticket and general information and fans' advertisements (requests for lifts, sales of old programmes, handbooks etc). These ideas, coupled with the decision for Blues away travel coaches to depart from outside the shop, would surely generate futher trade. So despite the graffiti, the Soccer Shop's facade is excellent, its interior display bright and its full time staff endearing - probably the club's most welcoming employees. Much of the merchandise is good, whilst certain items need improving and others dustbinned forthwith.

What's now needed to develop the place further is a bit more of the forward thinking and initiative that got the shop re-opened and looking so good in the first place.

JIM BRYANT

0898 LINES WE DON'T APPRECIATE

Two strange men into 0898 telephone numbers recently visited - they were hurried indoors. Parade our wares on one of their lines and we'd get to keep half the profits. Something a bit racy perhaps, or a 'Call John Westmancoat' argument number? Not so. A Tired and Weary Line was their fancy, and it promised rich pickings. A six minute call at peak-time, for example, would generate 51p for ourselves, 51p for our confederates, even more for Telecom, and a considerable shortfall for the caller. Hence we declined, and hope other fanzines contacted will do the same. Because, no matter what's planned for such a line, the caller has to pay through the nose and that's wrong.

The same realities lie behind Blues 0898 number: its primary function isn't to provide a 'service' or be an 'information line', but to generate money - lots of it. This is perhaps best illustrated by live match commentaries. Ninety minutes will cost £22.50 (better hope there's no injury time) - way in excess of actually going to even the most distant away games. And those 'phoning should be fully aware just how much it'll set them back. Yet the recordings don't do this, and Clubcall adverts regularly appear in the programme without the legally required warning that calls cost 38p per minute peak, and 25p per minute off-peak.

The lines' content also has a poor reputation. Money-making rules the roost, so quality standards don't really exist. It's difficult to see how entertaining and worthwhile material can be provided when tapes are changed daily.

Banality soon becomes the norm. Simon Sturridge's comments following the Shrewsbury home defeat are typical: "...obviously good results will keep the people happy... a few good results and things will be okay again... we've got to keep playing... you want to win the game... we tried our hardest, that's all we can do... the best we can do is get a result..." It's enough to make you fall asleep - and then you really would run up a bill!

True, revenue is essential to the club's future plans, and people don't have to 'phone Clubcall. But funds should only be raised through value for money ventures, not through 0898 numbers. Blues exist to gain footballing success for their followers and they shouldn't pursue this by exploiting the very same people. They are a big, industrial-based club with potentially large support, and shouldn't rely on schemes requiring fans to repeatedly fork out. Re-installing the old 24-hour answering machine for any relevant information would be more sensible. A club newsletter could also be considered and further improvements made to the programme and tannoy system. Whatever, it's time Birmingham City Clubcall was put out of order.

JIM BRYANT

GREEN PIECE

'THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY'

This maxim of the Green movement should be taken seriously by everyone - but why by football and why by Blues?

The recent closure of food outlets at St Andrews on health grounds is a belated recognition of the scant regard Birmingham City has shown for the environment, and is symptomatic of decades of football neglecting its social responsibilities.

The alibi 'it's society's problem, not football's' won't do because for 90 minutes each week up and down the country football is a significant part of society. In producing 100,000 programmes a season Birmingham City will destroy about 30 trees. They'll sell over 50,000 refreshments as well, with most of the packaging finding its way to the floor. Multiply these figures by 92 and it soon becomes clear how much of an impact the game has on the environment.

Yet wider ethical issues are involved. Football has a uniquely high public profile and so is well placed to take decisions showing a sense of social responsibility. Unfortunately, Birmingham City's record off the field mirrors that on it. The development of the Elmdon training ground could mean the loss of several acres of precious Green Belt land. Blues stand to make around £5m from the deal so why should they care about its wider implications? Well, if all large institutions felt this way, there'd soon be no green space left to play football on.

In the light of the Taylor Report many clubs will be considering ground redevelopments and perhaps relocation. Should 50 clubs build new out-of-town stadia it would alter the landscape irredeemably. Therefore, any relocation scheme should ensure that the original ground is not entirely given over to retail or commercial development. Without some counterbalancing leisure or park scheme, a football club could be creating two environmental blackspots - one at its old site, one at the new. Oil companies are required to restore the environment after building a pipeline, so perhaps football clubs ought also to shoulder some responsibilities.

Significantly, in building or altering stadia, clubs will be entering the realm of local politics and planning applications. Clubs showing little regard for their impact on the community are unlikely to be looked on favourably. A club such as Birmingham City should therefore review all its practices on environmental and ethical grounds to clean up its image.

For a start, to offset the likely loss of greenery at Elmdon, as well as to remove an eyesore and embarrassment, efforts should be made to redesign the area around St Andrews, incorporating trees, football pitches and a decent car park.

If the club could demonstrate its willingness to change things unilaterally, council support for more fundamental redevelopment is more likely (and though Elmdon comes under Solihull Council jurisdiction, there's still a lot of work to be done at St Andrews that will require local authority approval).

It is hard to imagine when some areas of the ground were last cleaned. The club could hold a special Green Day with supporters tidying the ground in return for match tickets etc. Everyday practices at the club should be greened. For instance the floodlights could be turned off more quickly after matches (at least Blues don't leave them on for a couple of hours or so, as is often done at Villa Park) and ensuring that club vehicles run on unleaded petrol. Parts of St Andrews could be designated non-smoking, programmes and stationery should be on recycled paper, refreshments sold in bio-degradable packaging and waste cardboard recycled, not left to rot in skips outside the ground.

And talking of cardboard, the food at Blues is both unappetising and unhealthy. It's time caterers with imagination were engaged, serving wholesome, healthy snacks, even offering organic and vegetarian fayre, instead of the aptly named Pukka pies.

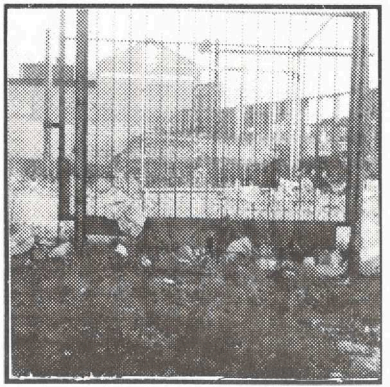
Another issue of ethical concern is sponsorship. It's disappointing to see that Mars Bars are the 'official World Cup snack'. The international image of the game is unlikely to be enhanced by association with a product whose Heath Education Fund once tried to 'prove' it didn't cause tooth decay, by financing research that involved keeping monkeys on a diet of Mars bars. FIFA president Joao Havelange's latest wheeze, turning football into a game of four 25 minute quarters to supply more ad breaks during the 1994 World Cup, shows how ripe the sport is for commercial exploitation. Football shouldn't be run on the basis of which sponsor is the highest bidder, rather all deals must ensure that back-

ers conform to strict guidelines on human and animal rights, as well as pollution control.

Closer to home the ethical records of club sponsors should be above suspicion. Rather than Mark One, Blues might follow the lead of West Brom a few years ago, who wore NO SMOKING signs on their shirts in a deal with the Regional Health Authority.

Many of the steps towards Green football might save money in the long run as well as generating much-needed short term publicity. Birmingham City could take the lead in something for a change, by becoming an ethical football club and reminding the rest of the game of its wider duties (at least our Managing Director is already playing his part with the Walsall Scrap Metal Company).

If you think I'm being naive or idealistic just bear in mind that in the time you've been reading this article an area of forest equivalent to 100 football pitches has been destroyed.



DAVID PARKER

For more information on what you can do to help protect the environment contact Friends of the Earth 54-57 Allison Street, Birimingham B5. Tel: 021 632 6909. Greenpeace 30 Islington Green, London N1. Tel: 01 354 5100. The Ethical Consumer Magazine. ECRA Publishing, 100 Gretney Walk, Moss Side, Manchester M15 5ND. Tel: 061 226 6683

SHARE DESPAIR SHARE DESPAIR SHARE

On March 1st, the Football Supporters Association wrote to the Secretaries of our local League clubs, urging them not to take their allocation of FA Cup Final tickets, but instead to either pass them on to the competing finalists or back to the Football Association.

Only one club secretary failed to reply. However, that same club secretary did reply to a letter from Nigel Roberts, one of the infamous "49 gentlemen of the terrace". The correspondence between the two went thus:

11th March 1990

Dear Sir,

I have recently acquired one ordinary share in Birmingham City, but I have moved house since my original application. My certificate number is 432.

I shall be obliged if you will kindly note my change of address and ensure that all correspondence is correctly addressed.

For the purpose of your records, do you require the share certificate to be returned for amendment?

Yours truly, Nigel James Roberts

19th March 1990

Dear Sir

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 11th March 1990.

Your name is not listed on our records, therefore I am unable to assist you.

All transfer of shares must be made in accordance with company law, every such transaction being made on an official Transfer Stock Form.

Yours faithfully
H J Westmancoat
Secretary

21st March 1990

Dear Sir

I am obliged to you for your letter of the 19th March, the contents of which both baffle and disturb me.

I enclose a photocopy of my share certificate number 432 and you may be interested to note that it bears your signature as Secretary. I assume therefore, that you would not have put your name to any transaction which did not comply fully with the requirements of company law?

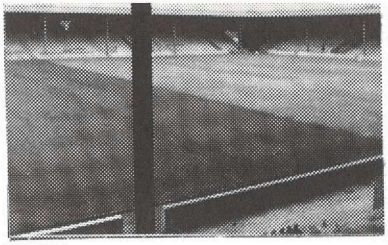
It was kind of you to supply the information in the third paragraph of your letter; please note however that I am a solicitor and as such am fully aware of the necessity of complying with required procedures.

It seems to me that as you have issued a share certificate in my name, I can consider myself to be a shareholder in this company and under the circumstances I await hearing from you.

Yours faithfully
Nigel Roberts

On 5th April Nigel Roberts received an unconditional apology from Westmancoat. The FSA however were still waiting for a response. They'll probably have to wait to see if Manchester United make it to Wembley. If they succeed, then the demand for tickets from inside St Andrews will be phenomenal. If Ken Wheldon plays his cards right, he could make a bomb out of it!

SADDLERS UNWELL



The prospect of moving into the most modern football stadium in Britain might sound attractive. But for Walsall, nosediving to the Fourth Division, the move could sound their death knell. Their experience should be a salient lesson for every football club in the land.

Peter Gilman is Vice-Chairman of Leeds United, and by all accounts he'd one day like to become Chairman. Michael Norris is on the board of Charlton Athletic and for much of the past year has been trying to return them to The Valley. In late 1987, just after Black Monday had wiped billions off share values, Terry Ramsden, absentee Walsall Chairman, was trying to sell his 76% stake in the club. Barclays Bank advised Ramsden that Maurice Miller, owner of Leeds-based engineering group Whittington PLC might be interested. It was known that Walsall wanted away from Fellows Park and the bank felt that Miller could help them realise their goal. Miller was interested and turned to Gilman (with whom he shared several directorships) and Norris, who between them did the deal with Ramsden. And on March 25th 1988 it was announced that the Saddlers had been sold for £398,000.

A couple of months earlier, the consortium had bought two off-the-shelf companies. In one, Newheld Investments (later Davenmanor) Maurice Miller became the main shareholder. The other, Lanesmead Investments (later Denglen) had Gilman and Norris as co-owners.

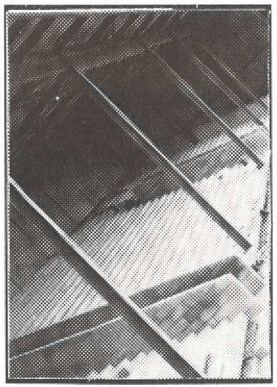
Two members of Whittington's Bloxwich subsidiary (JW Bonser Engineering) Jeff Bonser and Ray Clift, joined Miller and existing Walsall Director Barrie Blower on the board at Fellows Park, with Blower becoming Chairman.

Crucially, Davenmanor then transferred ownership of Fellows Park to Denglen, keeping control of the football club themselves. Now Walsall no longer owned their ground - and their main source of collateral for future borrowing had gone. As landlords, Denglen are free to charge the football club rent for the new stadium. They have settled on £75,000 p.a., index-linked to inflation.

Denglen then sold Fellows Park, which already had planning permission for a supermarket development, to the Gateway chain for a staggering £5.75m. Ramsden was paid back £400,000 he'd injected into the club and Davenmanor recouped their initial £398,000 outlay. The board claim that the new ground, at Bescot Crescent, is costing around £4.5 m. But the stadium covers only 13 acres of a 45 acre site and the entire development, consisting largely of retail warehouses, is estimated to be worth around £20m, leaving Denglen with serious profits. And to keep everything neat and tidy, Peter Gilman has appointed one of his own companies, GMI Landmark, to undertake construction of the site. The various deals still leave a shortfall of around £400,000 between the money raised from the sale of Fellows Park and that spent paying off debtors and building the new ground. In August 1988, Blower told 'Off The Ball' that **"PROFITS FROM THE SALE OF FELLOWS PARK MUST BE USED BY THE CLUB."** Though Walsall are losing money hand over fist, they have shown a profit on transfer deals in the last two years, so it's unlikely that the 400 grand has been spent keeping the club afloat. Exactly where it has gone is uncertain, but the suspicion must be that it went to Denglen. And if the cost of access roads, car parking and other works beneficial to the entire 45 acres has come out of the Fellows Park sale money, then this is a clear abuse of Blower's promise.

Another questionmark hangs over who purchased a Council-owned car park in Hilary Street, adjacent to Fellows Park. After protracted negotiations the Council accepted £0.5m for the land, vital to the redevelopment of the old ground, but it's unclear whether the football club or Denglen paid for it.

Several incidents highlight Denglen's attitude. Shortly after the takeover, it was announced that they had an option to receive



one third of all transfer income as insurance against cash flow problems. Blower and Club Secretary Roy Whalley insist that the option was never taken up, but it shows what could be railroaded through when the club have so little control over their affairs. After agreeing to build the Supporters Club new premises at Bescot as payment for acquiring their old one at Fellows Park, Denglen refused to pay the £0.25m needed to fit it out. A compromise was reached with the Supporters Club, but it left little doubt how determined the developers were to maximise their profits.

The new stadium's capacity - initially intended as 16,000 - has been reduced to under 12,000. Blower had told 'Off The Ball': **"THE OWNERS ARE VERY INTERESTED IN MAKING THIS CLUB PART OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY"** and there were proposals for an all-weather training pitch and multi-screen cinema. Apart from the possibility of building a bowling alley, these ideas have never left the drawing board.

And there are grave doubts as to whether Gilman and Norris are not contravening Football League rules on club ownership. At a recent 'meet the Chairman' evening, Blower stated that Miller (who rarely, if ever, goes to Walsall matches) was the major shareholder on paper only - presumably meaning that he is on the board as Gilman and Norris's nominee. League Regulation 80 states that **"NO OFFICIAL MAY, AT ONE TIME, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, BE INVOLVED IN ANY CAPACITY WHATSOEVER IN THE MANAGEMENT OR ADMINISTRATION OF MORE THAN ONE CLUB."** Quite why the Football League have allowed this situation to continue for over two years without investigation goodness knows.

There can be no doubting Walsall's increasing financial crisis. Blower says that their break-even attendance is 6,000 - and currently they're struggling to attract 4,000. It is surely no coincidence that Andy Saville was sold just two days before John Barnwell's sacking left Walsall facing a large contractual compensation claim. Plans for undersoil heating and a pitch cover at Bescot Crescent have been dropped and there are rumours that talks with the local council (who are great supporters of the football club) on establishing a Trust to run the Saddlers may also have discussed the club's financial salvation.

Meanwhile, paying £75,000 rent each year is a burden Walsall could well do without. When the keys to the new ground are handed over in late May, Davenmanor might move out and the football club could be run by a Trust comprising of Council and supporters reps and some current board members. True, this will greatly lessen the possibility of the football club becoming prey to men on the make, but it's a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted - the Saddlers have already been stripped of their greatest asset.

Walsall could have developed their new stadium independently - or in conjunction with the Council (as Scunthorpe United did) providing some of the community facilities that will be so sadly lacking at Bescot Crescent. They would have retained control of their own ground and possibly made sufficient profit on the move to pay off their debts AND had money to invest in team strengthening. Only Ramsden's desire to get as much as he could as quickly as he could allowed the present situaiton to develop.

In the light of the Taylor Report many clubs will be looking to move grounds. Football League regulations governing club ownership are so rarely enforced that Peter Gilman and Michael Norris were able to drive a coach and horses through them without fear of being stopped. But for their holding directorships at other clubs, what they have done is entirely legal. They saw a development opportunity and simply exploited it to the full.

Until the League introduce a strict registration system for directors and football club owners, Walsall and their ilk will always be prey to speculators. The Football League cannot afford its clubs to be put at risk so easily. It must get its act together - **NOW!**

Steve Beauchampé

FOOLS GOLD!
AN 18 CARAT STORY...
MAN UTD
WELL KEN THE FENCES HAVE GOT TO COME DOWN...
I COULD HAVE A BIT OF THE ACTION!
BRIGHT IDEA
DONT WORRY SAM - I'LL HANDLE IT (DROOL)
SO THE FENCES COME DOWN, BUT THE SHOW GOES ON!
NAFFIN HELL THIS PIES A BIT ROUGH!
YOURE RIGHT HEAVE - BLOOARRGH!!
REFRESHMENTS
DAVENPORTS
WALSALL SCRAP METAL CO
KEN
OK LADS!
WALSALL SCRAP ME
WHERE DO YOU WANT THESE FRED?
PUT EM OVER THERE WITH THE WALSALL FENCES JOE

WHAT DO YOU MEAN THE FANS ARE COMPLAINING ABOUT THE FOOD! ALL THIS IRON WILL DO THEM GOOD!
RIGHT THEN GORBY, HAVE WE GOT A DEAL ON THE IRON CURTAIN OR NOT?
IVE MELTED THE FENCES DOWN JOHN BUT I DONT KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THEM.. MMMM-
Love Big Ron xxx
ATKINSON
BWIVER
A-M
T-Z
Love Big Ron xxx
-IVE GOT IT!
PLEASE KNOCK
JOHN'S NOT IN HERE BOSS
WHERE THE HELL IS HE THEN?
MANCHESTER UNITED
SAM! IVE GOT A GREAT NEW LINE FOR THE CLUB SHOP IT'S A REAL MONEYSPINNER
AND SO...
CLUB SHOP
WALSALL SCRAPMETAL Co.
MADE IN WALSALL PURE GOLD
GOLD PRAY
99P

DON'T JUST SIT THERE

The publication of the Taylor Report marks the end for several ways of thinking about football: not just by administrators and politicians, but supporters also. However the media and political responses to Taylor have displaced the more general questions raised in favour of a simple choice between ID cards or all-seat stadia. It is vital that less well publicised aspects of the Report are highlighted.

Chapter One is a damning indictment of both the long history of complacency and the present contempt in which most clubs hold their supporters. Taylor expresses this graphically in terms such as "lametable' and "squalid", and makes a pointed contrast between the terraces and "a different world only a few yards away in the Boardrooms and executive boxes". Police treatment of away supporters is also criticised: "reminiscent of a column of prisoners of war". Fences with spikes and overhanging sections are to go and the free market activities of ticket touts outlawed.

But welcome as these and other statements are, the Report does no more than allude to possible solution, such as gradual desegregation and more consultation with supporters, and asks rather perplexed questions such as "Why there cannot be cheap, fresh, fast-food at football?"

The whole tone of the Report's later sections is of a onetime football enthusiast (Taylor used to go to Newcastle) who has some feeling for the game but is not really in touch. This is evidenced by his hankering "for Corinthian Casual standards" his view of players celebrating goals as "calculated to hype the fans up into hysteria" and his recommendation the "Use should be made of illuminate advertising boards to address the crowd". More serious is his willingness to further augment police powers by creating the specific offences of missile throwing, obscene or racist chanting and "going on to the pitch without reasonable cause". In principle, welcome recommendations, but they ignore the dangers to law-abiding supporters from arbitrary enforcement of them by police forces not renowned for following the spirit, let alone the letter of the law. And exactly what is "reasonable cause" when it comes to a pitch invasion?

But it is the recommendation that by August 1999 (1994 for the top two divisions) fans are admitted only to seated accommodation that has been the focus of most debate. Section II of the Football Supporters Act already gives the new Football Licensing Authority the power to make seating a condition of a license. So the machinery already exists. But the result may not necessarily be all-seat grounds; rather terraces could be closed with supporters moved into existing seating areas.Taylor sees this as one way of avoiding the cost problem in the lower divisions. But for many clubs this will be unrealistic. Take Blues, with 8,000 seats. That's around our average gate this season, but the Forest Cup-tie of 1988 showed the potential for regular crowds in excess of 30,000 should the club ever achieve significant success. Even if all of St Andrews were converted to seats it's hard to envisage a capacity exceeding 25,000. Remove terracing and you remove a freedom. Not just a freedom to stand, but a freedom to move if you don't like the people around you or if there's a stanchion blocking your view. And the Popplewell Report into the Bradford fire showed how seats can bring new dangers such as lack of easy escape, and access by emergency services.

Taylor merely ASSUMES seats are always safer, he doesn't convincingly argue why. It depends on patterns of fan behaviour. The Railway End in 1988/89 demonstrated the problems of supporters used to terraces moving into seats. And those present at St Andrews on May 11th 1985 will need no reminding that hooliganism is not precluded by seating.

The Government's long overdue, but still very welcome, decision to reduce pools betting duty by 2.5% to 40% (reversing an increase this Government imposed in 1982) coupled with

the £75m that the Football Trust had earlier set aside for ground improvements, should go a long way to meeting the cost of conversion. But nevertheless smaller capacities will mean that demand exceeds supply more often, thus leading to a rise in admission prices. Such an increase could result in significant chunks of the population being effectively barred from the game. Not just young males, with the attendant social problems of boredom and lack of identity this might bring, but also family groups, for whom going to a match could become a £20-30 experience.

And a reduction in ground capacities carries with it further dangers that Lord Justice Taylor has ignored. It will lead to more lockouts. On past (even post-Hillsborough) evidence it's reasonable to suspect that some clubs will be tempted against making big games all-ticket (Arseanl v Spurs this season, estimated 10,000 turned away) if doing so might mean a smaller crowd and less revenue (inconvenience of needing to buy beforehand etc) This only increases the chances of overcrowding. Also, some clubs - Wolves and Leeds come readily to mind - can usually fill their ground with home supporters alone. Decreased capacities will exacerbate this making it more likely that clubs will ban visiting fans (Wolves have already threatened to do this). As anyone who's got into Luton knows, such enforced segregation only further entrenches attitudes of supporter alienation.

But it is important not to react to Taylor by simply saying no to seats and ignoring the radical modernisation football needs. There is nothing inherently good about seating or bad about terracing, but money earmarked for new seats could be more usefully redirected to improving the design and amenities of the whole ground. The aim should be to provide safe, habitable, covered accommodation - a welcoming environment offering decent refreshments and social facilities that encourage fans to arrive earlier. This may result in higher prices, making it imperative supporters are involved from an early stage in redesigning THEIR grounds. Fans should build on Taylor's call for better facilites and increased supporter involvement, highlighting what is wrong at their own clubs. For instance, changes in the balance between seats and terracing should be decided by each club's fans, not by a binding nation edict which is inevitably insensitive to individual circumstances. The Taylor Report is merely the start of the fight for the games' soul. Despite the unprecedented criticism by a Government-appointed judge of parliamentary legislation, remarks by Moynihan in the Commons on January 30th indicate that the battle against ID cards is far from over: "We can return to the House in due course to tackle the problem of hooliganism." The clear implication being that by leaving Part I of the Football Spectators Act on the statute book the Football Membership Authority and ID cards could be swiftly resurrected in the aftermath of any trouble in Italy this summer.

This make it crucial supporters retain the arguments against the scheme and avoid playing into the Government's hands by merely rejecting all-seat stadia - a reaction as bereft of ideas as that of the football establishment.

Constructive proposals (such as the establishment of a Football Planning Board with supporter representation to design a strategy for the game into the 21st century) rather than knee-jerk sentimentalism are required if fans are to play their part in what Taylor terms "a totally new approach across the whole field of football."

If we don't do it, the Government will.

DAVID PARKER

Fans On The Pitch

What was your ambition in life as a footie mad youngster? To play for Blues and be the next Francis? To emulate Kenny Burns's sharp shooting and spitting skills? Or perhaps to follow in the footsteps of Noel Blake and nut Steve McMahon? This season Birmingham City fans have attempted to live out their fantasies by donning the famous blue jersey under the name Tired and Weary FC, and challenged like-minded supporters from other clubs.

And what happens when approximately 22 opposing fans get together is not a ruck, but a game of football played in a spirit where even a referee is often unnecessary. An after match drink is the norm with tales swapped of the pros and cons of our respective teams/grounds/chairmen etc.

TAW's debut game, played at Highgate Sports Centre, was against 'Leyton Orientear'. Despite starting with only 10 men we took an early lead. Our eleventh man arrived and soon the O's were level, eventually running out 3-1 winners. In the re-match a week later, despite being subjected to intense pressure, we battled to earn a 1-1 draw.

Christmas saw our third game - and our first victory; 1-0 away to 'The Pie' (the Notts County fanzine). In a typically Saunderesque performance, we held on to a first half strike and just about deserved to win. Shrewsbury may be Blues' bogey side at present, but our game with their 'zine team (A Large Scotch) almost made up for our professionals' woeful showing against the men from Gay Meadow. We won 10-1, though admittedly our opponents were experiencing their first taste of fanzine footie action.

The game vs. Normid Nomad (Bolton) was also against a recently formed team, and was played in a potentially hostile environment right outside Burnden Park, a couple of hours before the Third Division match. But we soon silenced the home crowd with a 13-0 triumph - not really a cliffhanger. Thus 23 goals in 2 games, and to quote Dave Mackay we now 'fear no-one'.

In each of our away trips, to Leyton Orient, Notts County and Bolton Wanderers, we've been made extremely welcome, something which visiting supporters are unused to. Hopefully such events are helping to change the popular misconception of Blues fans. This was particularly true at Notts County, where some of The Pie's team were genuinely worried about meeting us. And hopefully we're playing our part in exploding the myth that supporters from different clubs can't be desegregated or allowed to socialise. True, we haven't yet lined up against Villa fans, but it won't be a problem - 'cos we'll thrash them too!

HUGH O'SULLIVAN

GIVE ME RED JELLY

Footballing opponents soon to be matched against the ruthless Tired and Weary XI include BIRMINGHAM UNITED MAGAZINE. Formed since our last issue, it's a general fanzine covering Blues, Villa and West Brom. The latest issue contains reasonable Blues coverage, featuring articles on a Villa fan's trip to St Andrews and a humourous comparison between the two Birmingham teams. Still in its infancy, BUM seems a bit of a hit-and-miss affair, but my main gripe is the difficulty in obtaining a copy. Number 3 is out now with an increased print run, so perhaps more supporters will get hold of this brave venture.

1990 has finally seen the emergence of a Walsall fanzine SADDLE SORE, and the first edition promises much. The club's numerous failings and scandals should provide the authors with a wealth of material to capitalise on.

General soccer magazine WHEN SATURDAY COMES has recently undergone a slight change in format in an attempt to lose its somewhat stereotyped look. Unfortunately the revamp includes a 20p price increase and the acceptance of adverts. But in between the rather repetitive features can be found some innovative and well-researched ones such as issue 38's excellent April Fool's piece. There's also a somewhat patchy report on policing - and no prizes for guessing that a supporters' poll singles out the West Midlands Constabulary for criticism. When Saturday Comes is worth a glance next time you're in WH Smith, if only for their extensive fanzine publications list.

Despite the rise in professionalism of supporters literature, there remains room for new raw mags, such as THE FURIOUS HARRY. It's a no holds barred political effort with a centre-fold comparing Maggie Thatcher to Adolf Hitler. On the footballing side, issue one states that Birmingham City "should be a First Division force" and "the fans deserve better" which in my book makes this 'zine worthy of recommendation.

THE BIRMINGHAM CITY LONDON SUPPORTERS CLUB newsletter continues to keep Capital Brummies up-to-date, through match reports, press cuttings etc. and is already up to issue 3. While the likelihood of coming across OVER THE WALL (Albion Rovers Fanzine) is small, lurking in the second edition is an outstanding two page appraisal of our beloved club. Perhaps the next Tired and Weary will include an in-depth insight on the Cliftonhill club - you just never know.

Hugh O'Sullivan

ADDRESSES: BIRMINGHAM UNITED MAGAZINE (A5) 50p 342 Chester Road North, Sutton Coldfield B73 6RP. SADDLE SORE, (A5) 40p Rush Common House, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 2AJ. WHEN SATURDAY COMES (A4) 80p 1-11 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QM. THE FURIOUS HARRY, (A5) 50p PO Box 556, Wrexham, Clwydd LL1 1XN. BIRMINGHAM CITY SUPPORTERS CLUB NEWSLETTER (A5) 50p 90J St Georges Drive, Pimlico, London SWIV 4DA. OVER THE WALL (A5) 50p 15 North Drive, Tooting, London SW16 or 27 Crusoe Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3LJ. All above prices not inclusive of postal costs. Most can be purchased from Nostalgia and Comics, Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham.

BLUES ON THE UP!

Blues brought down to earth

Blues coming to end of nightmare

Blues' false promise

EXASPERATED Birmingham City manager Dave Mackay, his team under fire from angry Blues fans after the dismal performance against Wigan, today admitted: "I felt like booing myself."

A PERSONNEL APPRAISAL

Newspaper headlines symptomatic of Blues inconsistent, erratic and often downright frustrating season. Some performances have been reminiscent of last term, lacking passion, commitment and skill, while on other occasions we've looked capable of matching any team in the division. Victories over Tranmere and Rotherham, a draw at Bristol Rovers and an unlucky defeat at Ashton Gate, have been offset by embarrassing hammerings at Chester, Aldershot, Mansfield and the selfsame Tranmere and Rotherham. Blues' true position lies somewhere in between - a just above average Third Division team only capable of gaining promotion via the backdoor.

> Having said that I am so delighted the way our youngsters are performing, and while our reserves lost heavily, 6-1, at Stockport on Tuesday night, they still put up a very good performance,

Despite employing the sweeper system for much of the season the defence has rarely looked solid. By playing a typically myopic English-style system, rather than the more imaginative continental one, our attacking options are seriously impaired. In front of Martin Thomas who, apart from occasional lapses still looks capable of playing in a higher grade, is a defence lacking pace in key departments. Their vulnerability at set pieces has cost dearly and one wonders what they are doing in training to try and rectify the problem.

Vince Overson marshalls the back four well enough, but he's ponderously slow, and his inability to turn quickly makes him susceptible to any half-decent nippy forward. For similar reasons Ian Atkins isn't suited to the centre-back role and though he's done OK as sweeper, his best position is surely in midfield. A similar role would suit the pedestrian John Frain who has often been found wanting at left-back. No major qualms about Kevin Ashley though. October's Young Eagle of the Month may not be playing quite as well as last season, but Blues were right to reject Wolves' recent £350,000 bid. A first choice First Division class right-back, Ashley could win international honours before too long. Of the remaining contenders for defensive duties, Trevor Matthewson, ever present at the time of writing, has played his best football at left-back. It's difficult to see Jesse Sproson ever solving our central defensive problem, perhaps a fully-fit Matthew Fox is the answer. Ian Clarkson, another youngster nurtured by the invaluable Fred Davies, performs wholeheartedly when called upon but is basically a squad player. Brian Roberts meanwhile, despite his presence bringing much -needed mirth to the proceedings ,looks certain to be put out to pasture at the end of the season.

The midfield has shown intermittent symptoms of mad cow disease. Kevin Langley is inconsistent and never scores, Dougie Bell has been a waste of 60 grand, John Deakin quickly disappeared from first team contention and is now suffering a long-term injury, while Paul Shepstone has ended up at Atherstone. On the plus side, the much

berated (particularly by us) Dean Peer has greatly improved and is the nearest we've got to a tough-tackling ball winner. The class though is provided by Nigel Gleghorn. His blinder of a strike at Northampton was the best of several memorable goals - and when was the last time a Blues midfielder scored 10 times in one season? However, Gleghorn shares a fault common to many in the team. Once we fall behind his head drops. Indeed the victory at Huddersfield was the first time we'd come from behind to win a game since the 2-1 win over Leeds in November 1986. Surprisingly,many of the fighting qualities associated with Dave Mackay are not evident in the team he manages and to put it bluntly,Blues lack bottle.

The biggest improvement on last season has been up front. At £80,000 Dennis Bailey has proved a bargain. Despite spells when he appears to lack both confidence and a sense of balance the goals continue to flow. Simon Sturridge is every bit as good. Arguably the most skilful performer in the side, he does tend to fade out of games, but perhaps that's as much down to the midfield's failings than anything else. Whatever the reason, he's still learning and is a mouthwatering prospect. Another precocious youngster is Paul Tait. His cracking goals against Walsall and Rotherham are hopefully a foretaste of more to come. However, Mackay's outlandish statements about how Tait is better than Francis,and the accompanying press hype, only put unwarranted pressure on his frail shoulders. With none of these three being target men, a lot of responsibility has been placed on Colin Gordon. He hasn't really produced the goods (partly due to injury) though his mere presence can be off-putting and work to the benefit of those around him. As Mark Yates has yet to command a regular first team place it's feasible that Blues might have to spend again if they want to cause a regular aerial threat to opposition defences. We also lack a good winger. Sturridge is decent enough, but is largely wasted out wide but with Robert Hopkins fading from contention, we lack options on the flanks.

Too many of our players are not the stuff the glory, glory days are made of. So many permutations have been tried and frankly, the side hasn't looked significantly better or worse almost irrespective of who has been played. Perhaps our good start raised false hopes that we'd climb straight back into Division Two. But a recurrent lack of dedication and professionalism has cast serious doubt on our promotion credentials in what is an utterly mediocre Third Division. But failure to go up could result in the sale of our best players and a downturn in attendances. Having said that, to turn the club around from the depths we had sunk to last season is no easy task and despite his often questionable tactics, Dave Mackay, should be given at least until the middle of next season - regular change rarely brings success. For this term though, the recent rather stop/start revival means we should be challenging for a play off spot right to the wire. And however questionable the ethics of such a system, it should at least keep attendances buoyant, which in turn will generate much needed cash. Who knows, it may yet result in a trip to Wembley. We should be so lucky!

HUGH O'SULLIVAN

Blue Mourning

As the fearful hand of fate
Moved past ninety eighty-eight
Onto April eighty-nine
Blues in terminal decline
Plunging to the Third Division
Suffering Villa fans' derision
When new fixture lists appear
Hear the Villa fans all jeer
When I see the lists I spew
First game - home to bleedin' Crewe
Goodbye Plymouth, West Brom, Stoke
Welcome Mansfield - what a joke!
Brummagem's gone down the drain
Where once was Francis now is Frain
One night, dreaming, had a vision
Blues back in the First Division
Dreamed we'd won the League and Cup
'Till the missus woke me up
Waking with a weary yawn
In the unrelenting dawn
Hear a voice from distraught spouse
Trying to my sense arouse
"Last night when you got undressed
You wept and cried 'the club's gone west'
Last night they went even wester
Getting stuffed four-nil at Chester"
Dave Mackay then sets new targets
Says we'll murder Allied Carpets
Me, I grind my ancient gnashers
Think back to the Brummie Bashers
Turner, Duckhouse, Jackie Badham
Would have hitched their shorts and had 'em
Will we ever rise again
Rise up from this murky drain
Having p'raps worse things in store
Down among Division Four
Scarborough, Maidstone, York, Carlisle
Thoughts most dreadful, thoughts most vile
But there's even worse to follow
Pills more bitter yet to swallow
Thought we'd seen the bloody lot
'Till we went to Aldershot
Blues fans fall upon your knees
Ask the Lord with words like these
Grant that p'raps some distant day
Birmingham will win away
May once more the Blues arise
Satisfy our deep desires
Before this Blue-nosed kid expires

ARTHUR O'SULLIVAN

Letters

Having recently travelled with the Supporters Club to Crewe I felt that I must write a few words of congratulation. After experiencing years of ridiculously early starts, an 11.45 am departure let us recover from Friday night in bed. Executive coaches with reclining seats. Videos showing the Oldham and Preston games. Home for 6 o'clock - yes, 6 o'clock! And, best of all, we beat 'em 2-0.

Well done Blues. We've all slagged you off over recent results, the reign of Wheldon or the state of the ground etc. But the improvement in away travel coupled with the re-opening of the Tilton marks the rebirth of the Blues. Even the programme seems good. All we need now is Joe Bradford and Eddie Brown up front and a decent left back.

CARL DAINTER, SOLIHULL

Following the articles about players who only made one appearance for Blues, I've discovered one who I think beats the lot. In the first home programme of the 1984/85 season (v. Wimbledon) there's a two page profile on 'City Man' David Giles.

The 27 year old Welshman was the second of Ron Saunders' summer signings, joining us from Crystal Palace. In his profile he says "At Palace the ambition and the money ran out and things just went from bad to worse. I don't see that happening here". (Not much!)

Giles had won 16 caps with Wales and intended to improve that figure while with Blues. "I would love to get back into the picture and I'm confident I can with Birmingham City". He was described as a 'busy player just 5' 7" tall but with pace to nip past static defences'.

Well we waited for our first glimpse of this international player (we don't get many internationals at St Andrews) but despite the rave reports David Giles never made a first team appearance for Blues; I understand he got homesick and returned to Wales to play for Newport after only a couple of months at St Andrews, so we never did get to see his 'pace' and industry. I don't suppose we missed much.

IAN HOOPER, DRUIDS HEATH

A couple of us went by train to Shrewsbury's reserve match at Birmingham on February 7th. After getting soaked, and lost a few times, we arrived at the club shop where a man told us the game was off. So we returned to the station where we waited two hours for a delayed train. When we finally got home we heard on local radio that the match HAD taken place (on an artificial pitch I believe). We were not amused. If you ever discover who the chap in the club shop is, please drop him from the top of a floodlight! It won't change anything but it will make us feel a lot better.

Anyway, it amazes us how Town keep their jinx over City. And it amazes us how many home fans the police eject. If that happened at Gay Meadow we'd soon have no supporters left.

I'm glad Dougie Bell came on in the League game at St Andrews though, it gave us a chance to sing "What a waste of money", "Dougie, Dougie, what's the score?" and "Let's run round in circles". However, it's good to see Ian Atkins still getting 'stuck in'.

KEVIN BRIGHT, SHREWSBURY

BROWNIE POINTS

In answer to your request for information on Ian Brown, he now plays for Harwich and Parkeston in the Jewson (formerly East Anglian) League. The side are having their best season for years, being second behind Sudbury. The info' on Ian set out below comes from the Harwich fanzine 'Shrimpers Review'. The editor, Andy Schooler, who also writes for the programme and the local paper, rates Ian Brown as a class player.

TIM WHELAN, DERBY

DATE OF BIRTH - 11.09.65

PLACE OF BIRTH - Ipswich, Jamaica (about 11 miles from Montego Bay)

PREVIOUS TEAMS - Luton (schoolboy), Birmingham City, Felixstowe, Sudbury, Stowmarket.

FAVOURITE POSITION - Just behind the two front runners

HONOURS - South Suffolk and Suffolk U14, 15 and 16. England National Association of Boys Clubs U18 v Northern Ireland.

LEAGUE TEAM SUPPORTED - Leeds United

FAMILY - Married with baby Joshua (8weeks old)

JOB - Local Government Officer

MOST MEMORABLE FOOTBALL MOMENT - Coming on as sub' for Birmingham City v West Bromwich Albion in the Milk Cup Season 84/85. Birmingham lost 3-1.

This is just to tell you that Ian Brown, or 'Brownie' as he is known here, is alive and well and very much a favourite of the Harwich and Parkeston fans. Ian is playing a major part in the revival of Harwich's fortunes in the Jewson Eastern Counties League - up to and including February 17th he's our top scorer with 23 goals. Before joining Harwich he had spells with Chelmsford City (Beazer Homes League) and fellow Jewson League side Stowmarket Town.

Clearly Ian wasn't cut out for the Football League but he's certainly thriving at this level. He plays on the left and while he's still not a particularly good crosser, he's very quick around the area and most of his shots are on target.

Your profile was a bit cruel and I haven't decided whether to show it to him yet. We're away to Lowestoft on Saturday so if he scores a couple and is in a good mood I might let him see it on the return journey.

ANDY SCHOOLER HARWICH

With reference to the 'Not Famous For 15 Minutes' article in Issue 8 I noticed in the Sports Argus on January 27th that a left winger named Ian Brown had left Stafford Rangers and joined Gerry Daly at Telford Utd. Also, did you know that Tony Evans is at Alvechurch, John Trewick at Bromsgrove after being rejected by Hartlepool, and nobody cares where Guy Russell is.

Moving on to the Taylor Report, in the wake of Hillsborough it was obvious that drastic action had to be taken. Thankfully, the Government's ID card scheme has been shelved (but not entirely abandoned) but proposals to make grounds all-seaters are equally unfavourable. I believe that if the Government want all-seater stadia, then they should fund the conversions. Few clubs outside Division One can afford to swap terraces for seats.

Seating can kill an atmosphere, sometimes it provides a poor view (such as our own Railway End) and leads to fans paying a greater admission price.

Having said this, football clubs are businesses and they have no God-given right to exist. For example, persistent trouble in/outside a nightclub would lead to the closure of that club so why should football clubs have special rightsn

RICHARD DANCEY

This is positively my last word on the great Ian Brown controversy. I heard a scandalous allegation that he has been playing for Stafford Rangers, which the enclosed photographic evidence will disprove.

An Ian Brown has recently played for Stafford, but I can state with some confidence that it is not the same Ian Brown. THAT Ian is a Staffordshire county cricketer and former Port Vale player who is approximately two years younger than THE Ian Brown. (Info' from a Kettering v Stafford programme from 29.08.88).

I have shown Richard Dancey's letter to the Harwich fanzine editor. He will show the article to the great man himself so your Mr Dancey had better start saving up for the massive libel sums shortly to be awarded against him.

TIM WHELAN, DERBY

I have uncovered the whereabouts of Ian Brown. He is lead singer of top pop/rock combo The Stone Roses. Although many may be surprised at his radical change of career and skin colour (see photo) there is an explanation. It's partly a trick of the light and partly the result of Michael Jackson-style skilful skin surgery.

His flared trousers, Black Country paint flinging furore and involvement in the Manchester 'rave on' scene are a blatant backlash to the authoritarian rule of Rockin' Ron Saunders and his Save Our Society crusade.

Let's hope for the lad's sake that his period as a pep pill-popping partying pop pin-up lasts longer than his flirtation with footballing fame.

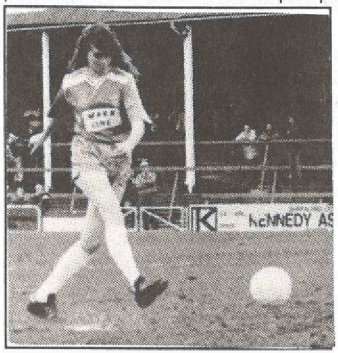
MISS AMBER O'SULLIVAN
ERDINGTON

THE LIFE OF BRIAN

"The new owners are very concerned with establishing a long-run association between the Club and its fans" - Blues News.
For once Westmancoat is right and the rhetoric and reality are in step. Since last November Brian Caswell, the ex-Walsall, Leeds, Doncaster and Wolves defender has been hard at work on the Football in the Community Scheme at St Andrews. This full-time post, funded by the Professional Footballers Association, is part of a general initiative started in the North West under the guidance of Roger Reid in 1986. It has now spread to 52 clubs, all sharing the idea of using the football club as a base from which to meet the needs of the local population.
With the Chairman's enthusiastic backing, Brian and his team of Employment Trainees have set about bridging the gap between Club and community. Decades of neglecting public relations at Birmingham City make this no easy task and there's undoubtedly scepticism, but the new board, combined with the rapid redevelopment of the derelict areas of East Birmingham envisaged in the Heartlands scheme make this an ideal time to start afresh.
The priority, says Caswell, is trying to teach young fans the right way of expressing their support for the club. After the trials and tribulations of the Beau Brummies and the True Blues, who in the past often had problems obtaining Club support for their activities, the Junior Blues has recently been launched. Intended mainly for 8-14 year olds (although one of its 100 plus members is only a few weeks old) the Junior Blues will hold regular meetings in the D Club as well as having coaching sessions on the morning of matches thanks to Dave Rose at the Holte Centre in Lozells. "Teach them good habits, instil the right virtues, get them to play and watch football in the right way" is Caswell's aim.
On Saturdays therefore the Community Scheme is far more than a few kids taking penalties at half-time. Youngsters from opposing teams are brought together through playing football matches in the morning, a tour around the ground, and then by sitting side by side to watch the 'proper' game in the afternoon. A real effort is made to make what for many is their first taste of League football a memorable one.
St Andrews on matchdays is merely the most visible manifestation of the week's activities. Recently Blues have been visiting schools as part of the scheme. These are not just whistle-stop tours. Indeed three weeks of events at Maple Dean school involved collaboration with the Health Education Department in coaching and fitness programmes besides player visits, and rounded off with a trip to St Andrews.
The opening of the Family Rooms at the Railway End will offer scope for extending the schools liaison scheme. Brian Caswell mentioned the prospect of schools holding lessons there, possibly doing maths projects related to the club (working out percentage attendance changes, pitch measurements etc.) Perhaps they could also do this year's accounts.
The Family Rooms are also seen as a way of improving links between the club and senior citizens. Caswell understands how the Leeds riot put off many older supporters and hopes shortly to take Blues match videos to local OAP homes to rekindle some interest. The Family Rooms could be opened during the week to provide a much needed focus for local residents of ALL ages, somewhere to drop in for a cuppa, a bicci and a chat.
But there's a major discrepancy between the ethnic mix of the area around St Andrews and that on the terraces. The Kumars

have undoubtedly stimulated interest among the Asian business community and the club is keen to use the Community Scheme to attract people of all races, particularly from the surrounding neighbourhood. To that end, local schools have been a major priority. On the day of our interview, the club was helping supervise a soccer match at Sommerville school. Small Heath school has also been a focus for the scheme, where, Caswell said, the response of more senior pupils was encouraging.

In all of these projects Brian Caswell was keen to stress how willing the players have been to assist. The scheme has helped right some of the breakdowns in internal communication which previously seemed to lit the team's role in promoting the club off the field. The overriding concern in all the community work is to make Birmingham City a far more important place in the lives of local people and to rid the club of its drab and unimaginative public profile. Financial gain is only a subsidiary motive, as Brian remarked:



"If we get a few youngsters in and they tell their friends and so on, in a couple of years time they could be coming regularly. Finance will come through a new breed of supporter." (Perhaps this may help counteract the drift amongst the City's youth towards supporting other, more fashionable and successful sides.)

Despite the hard work involved in launching the scheme at a club not used to projecting a positive image, Brian Caswell is clearly enjoying the job. However, he has some reservations.

Firstly the local media. Although some community events have been reported, the press are still more interested in a few troublemakers than in 300 kids having a great day out at St Andrews. More active promotion of the good work being undertaken will clearly be needed, particularly if it can be used as a method of interesting local businesses in sponsoring projects.

Secondly, the facilities available at Blues, though improved, still leave a lot to be desired. Disabled provision is at present adequate in that it is covered with a decent view, but there is only capacity for a dozen or so wheelchairs. If the scheme is to address such problems, Brian Caswell and his team will need to use their initiative - and the club's facilities - to the full.

The major problem however is the lack of a leisure facility for the joint use of Blues and the community. In this respect Luton, Oldham and Preston have obvious advantages with their all-weather pitches. Other clubs, such as Crewe and Bolton, have artificial playing surfaces adjacent to their ground. The waste land around St Andrews would be a perfect site for such a resource. But it seems that as yet there are no plans for a leisure scheme as part of Heartlands. So if Samesh took the initiative in contacting the City Council and finding backers there must be a real chance that a major leisure complex could be built.

Brian and his team are undoubtedly enthusiastic and eager to respond to any requests for the club to come to schools or hospitals or undertake any community work. "We want to get out and help as many people as we can on Birmingham City's behalf."

But it will need a long-term commitment coupled with the right management if this scheme is to enhance the club's standing in the community. And it will require the help of ordinary supporters to realise this objective, for example in sponsoring the Junior Blues or buying them a kit or supervising their away trips.

If anyone can help or would like to involve the club in a project then Brian Caswell would be delighted to hear from you on 021-766-6180.

As he stated at the end of the interview: "If people ring us, we'll listen. If we can offer help we will." It's a long time since anyone at St Andrews said that.

DAVID PARKER

NEVER TREVOR

Since February 1979 sporadic chants of "Bring back my Francis to me" have surfaced from the Blues faithful. During hard times, even when Trev wasn't making headlines far away, thoughts of him would somehow fill us with a sort of hope. Just as the world regularly speculates over The Beatles reforming, this part of it is obsessed with the possibility of Trevor Francis returning to St Andrews. Hence the sadness and, if we're honest, hint of bitterness when the local legend disappointed us again and signed for Sheffield Wednesday.

But, much as it hurts, it must be remembered that while Trevor retains some very special memories of Blues, he still feels the club held his career back. Let's face it, Francis never really had the affection for Blues that, for example, Garry Pendrey did. And he was given a wonderful incentive to come back and play in front of his biggest fans: Samesh largely confirmed press reports that club ambassadorship/presidency and eventual team managership, on top of a substantial salary (including a share of gate receipts) was offered.

Explaining his reasons for not returning to St Andrews in 'Match', w/e February 4th, Francis stated that "had they (Blues) not been in the Third Division I may well have rejoined them". It's also true that he didn't see eye to eye with Ken Wheldon. He feels Wheldon snubbed him by installing Pendrey as manager and has said he'll never return to St Andrews while Wheldon remains. If these feelings influenced Trevor's move to the Owls then it's a shame the pair couldn't have thrashed out their differences. If they tried and Wheldon apologised for any unjustifiable behaviour, then perhaps Francis should have accepted it. If Wheldon was in the wrong and wasn't prepared to take the initiative and apologise then he should have resigned. These permutations can be no more than speculation but if there's nothing to hide then all the facts should be out in the open. As things stand, there are still question marks over both parties. So what of the future? Francis tells 'Match' that he "only talked to the club out of courtesy". Unfortunately, by the time Trevor leaves Wednesday, his playing days may effectively be over. And he should never become Blues boss on the ticket of yet another 'people's hero'. On his own admittance, he has little knowledge of lower division football and his limited managerial experience brought its fair share of problems. On this evidence, doubts as to his temperament for such a post must surely be raised.

All these factors make it unlikely that Trevor Francis will have anything to do with Birmingham City in the forseeable future. Many young supporters may say 'So what?' and wonder why this is heartbreaking for many.Indeed,maybe the more the Francis saga rears it's head, the more turned off by him they may become. But they never saw Trevor in the blue and white and now probably none of us ever will again - and that's the real sadness.

JIM BRYANT

GET THAT FIESTA FEELING

Thinking of going to Italy for the World Cup? If not, then perhaps you should be, because not only is it the world's greatest football tournament, making being there one of life's great experiences, but it won't be back in Europe for at least 8 years, by which time you might be married with children, and a mortgage, and, and, and... So forget about England's square looking defence, press hooligan hype and the high cost of living it up - think of sea, sun, sand and Sardinia - and get that fiesta feeling!

How to get tickets: The Stadio Sant' Elia in Cagliari, Sardinia's capital, holds about 38,000. 20,000 vouchers are on sale in Italy (no tickets are being printed until May to lessen the risk of forgeries - perhaps the Italians don't think vouchers can be forged) with the rest divided equally between the competing countries. Out of England's allocation the officially appointed tour operators have around 6,000 and the FA 3,000. Should the Italians fail to sell their allocation (which appears likely) the FA have an option to buy extra tickets in May if required. These will be together in a block to help with segregation. To obtain a ticket you must first enrol in the England Travel Club. Membership costs £5 plus £5 for your first year's subscription. You must supply the FA with your travel and accommodation details. Tickets range in price from £10 to £66 for the first phase, rising to £145 for the Final (plus the 10% booking fee the Italians are insisting on). All are seat tickets, there will be no standing accommodation at this summer's tournament.

Travelling: The Italians have appointed 2 companies in England to sell tours: Italiatour and Cit-Sportsworld. Their holidays are expensive, starting at £660 for 11 nights self-catering and rising to between £725 - £2115 for a hotel (prices include match tickets and membership of the England Travel Club). Shorter tours are available, for instance Italiatour are running a day return to the England v Egypt match for £299. And for their longer trips Italiatour don't even tell you which resort you'll be staying in, let alone the hotel. Their ticket prices are extortionate, between £55 - £115 for the first phase, peaking at £265 for the Final (though at least these are included in the overall price). Their World Cup holidays are being handled by a guy called David Dryer. People who have followed either England or their own club side abroad may well be aware of the name. In their defence, the official tour companies have had to pay an exorbitant fee to get the hotels and tickets franchise - the Italians don't intend ending up out of pocket.

Two other companies, Clubscene and Tee Mill Tours have combined to offer trips. These start at £639 but you must buy your tickets from the FA. FSA members are entitled to a 5% discount. All of the tour operators are offering trips to the second phase and non-England games - inquire for detais. Leaflets and brochures for all of the tour companies should be at your local travel agent.

You can however travel independently or on a package holiday, and shopping around may save you quite a lot of money. Flights to Italy are going to be mighty expensive come June - expect to pay at least £200 (It's unlikely though that you'll get a direct flight to Sardinia now). A better idea might be to drive or take a train, alighting at Marseille (a youth fare from

London to Marseille costs £99) Naples or Civitavecchia (about 100 miles north of Rome) and catch a ferry. Remember however that Sardinia is at least 9 hours by ferry from mainland Italy. Another possibility is to stay on Corsica and travel over for the games. The ferry journey between the two islands takes one hour. For more details on travelling independently contact your local holiday shop or try FSA member and travel agent Dave Hancock on 01-583-5000 x 3408.

If you're making your own arrangements it is absolutely essential that you sort out accommodation beforehand. Apart from hotels and self catering apartments there are plenty of villas to rent. However, failure to book up in advance, apart from making it harder to be accepted by the England Travel Club, could lead to you sleeping rough with all the attendant problems that could bring. England's matches finish at around 10.30pm so be sure that you can get back to where you are staying after the games.

SARDINIA: About the size of Wales and with a population of around 3 million, Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean. It's a fairly undeveloped country with no motorways and little public transport runs outside the towns and cities after 6.00pm. There is a large central mountainous region reminiscent of a Clint Eastwood

film and with just as many bandits. It is not advisable to stray far off the main roads in this area. The journey from the northern port of Olbia to Cagliari takes about 5 hours. The island's main industry is tourism with the principal towns being Sassari, Olbia and Alghero in the North, Oristano in the mid-West and Cagliari - which has a population of 250,000 - in the South. There isn't a great deal to see in terms of history or architecture - you'll have to wait for the second phase for that. Cagliari is a fishing port and the Stadio Sant' Elia, built in the early 70's as a reward for the team's one and only triumph in the Italian League, is situated in the South East of the town. Average June Temperatures are around 23 degrees centigrade. The locals allegedly love English football, but hopefully not enough to buy the 20,000 tickets on offer to them. Gigi Riva, the golden boy of Italian football at the turn of the 60's lives on the island from where he makes dickhead statements about being scared to let his children onto the streets during England's visit - let's prove him wrong.

THE FSA: The Football Supporters Association intends to operate an advice and information centre for fans in Sardinia which will also double up as a media contact point. The centre is aimed at helping give fans an enjoyable and trouble-free holiday and will hopefully be able to assist in sorting out any legitmate problems with the relevant authorities. At least one Italian speaker will be on hand and hopefully Dutch and Irish fans will help to staff this office.

The FSA is also organising social events such as 5-a-side matches, quiz and social nights, hopefully with guest speakers, video evenings etc. (With 3 games in 11 days, and the mainland as good as in another world, actually going to football will not form a large part of the holiday.) The FSA has produced a World Cup T- Shirt (costing £6.99) and a badge (40p) which at last provide an alternative to the vicious Bulldog-style merchandise. The Association will have members staying in various parts of the island and it will be producing newsletters to keep fans abreast of events. It is hoped to carry out some fund-raising for a local charity and to make as much friendly contact with Italian supporters as possible to try and dispel the myths and alleviate the justifiable fears that there may be of English supporters. Additionally, the Association hopes to organise a protest against FIFA President Joao Havelange's call for matches to be played in four 25 minute quarters to suit the needs of TV advertisers when the US of A hosts the 1994 World Cup. This protest may take the form of a petition, or a standard letter for fans to post - wait and see. After the tournament, the FSA will report on the World Cup's organisation, the tour companies, press coverage and supporter behaviour. This will then be presented to FIFA, EUFA, the FA and other relevant bodies.

Financing this unique initiative will be costly and the FSA is currently looking for sponsors. If anyone can help then please write to: 8 Beaumont Road, Bourneville, Birmingham B30 2DY.

THE SECOND PHASE: Really tricky this one. Suffice to say that if we win our group we go to Bolognia. Second and it's Genoa and if we're one of the best four third placed teams we end up at either Milan or Turin. Anything worse and it's the front room with Jimmy Hill for company. It's unclear how second stage tickets will be distributed, but some priority will be given to those who attended all of the first phase. The best thing to do is to contact the FA or watch the press for details nearer the time. Unsatisfactory maybe, but there's little else that you can do unless you book up with a tour company in advance where you'll be paying a lot of money and taking a chance (admittedly small) that England won't make it to at least the first knock-out game.

GENERAL: The World Cup is a great opportunity to show everyone that English football fans are brilliant and can be welcomed anywhere. The prize is a return to European competition for our clubs and not having to listen to the birch 'em brigade spouting off in the press. Failure could mean a ban on the England team and the resurrection of Thatcher's ID card scheme. If you're not happy with the media's coverage and portrayal of English supporters, either now or in June, then 'phone the Press Council on 01-353-1248.

So buy a 78-hour long video to tape the tournament, get to Sardinia, eat, drink, watch soccer, make friends and - be merry. England expects.

For further information contact the Italian State Tourist Office (ENIT) 1 Princess Street, London W1R 8AY. Tel: 01-408-1254.

Essential Reading - Italy: Travellers Handbook 1989-90 available free from the above address.

FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION

The West Midlands Branch of the Football Supporters Association has a new venue for its branch meeting, which are held on the second Monday of each month. It's the Stafford Room of the New Imperial Hotel in Temple Street, Birmingham city centre. Meetings kick-off at 8.00pm and admission is free.

Guest speaker on May 12th is the author Simon Inglis, whose new book, The Football Grounds of Europe, has just been published.

On Saturday June 2nd, the West Midlands hosts the Football Supporters Association's Fifth National Conference, at Birmingham University. A guest speaker has yet to be confirmed but an invitation has been extended to Lord Just Taylor. The Conference, which will be the FSA's biggest yet, starts at 10am and is open to all members of the Association.

Annual membership of the FSA costs £3 and you can join either at Branch meetings or by sending a cheque or postal order made payable to the FSA to: The Football Supporters Association, PO BOX 11, Liverpool L26 1XP.